



# BWC List Release Training: Session 4

## A Proven Formula for Attracting Media Coverage

On March 28, 2006, Best Workplaces for Commuters<sup>SM</sup> concluded its 2006 list release training series by providing tips on achieving media coverage for a regional list release. Robin Snyder, an EPA Best Workplaces for Commuters team member, provided opening remarks and introduced the featured participant.

### Featured Participants

#### Robin Snyder, U.S. EPA

Ms. Snyder's presentation is available in PowerPoint format at <[www.bwc.gov/presentations/powerpoint.htm](http://www.bwc.gov/presentations/powerpoint.htm)>. A summary of Ms. Snyder's key points follows:

- The primary purpose of a list release is to get media coverage for the employers on the list. A secondary result is to increase public awareness about the growing demand for commuter benefits and the Best Workplaces for Commuters designation.
- High-ranking company spokespeople can help generate media interest. For example, TIAA-CREF in Colorado provided a vice president to speak with the media, which helped motivate broadcast coverage.
- Ms. Snyder pointed out that all the ideas and suggestions referenced on the call are supported by template materials available at <[www.bwc.gov](http://www.bwc.gov)>.
- Human interest stories and a diverse list of employers increase the chances of generating media coverage. One of the program's most notable media stories aired on NPR's Morning Edition and featured two Intel employees that met in a vanpool and eventually married. In addition, Ms. Snyder noted that the list should include large and small, public and private, and rural and suburban employers, which makes the Best Workplaces for Commuters designation and

story applicable to a wider segment of the media market.

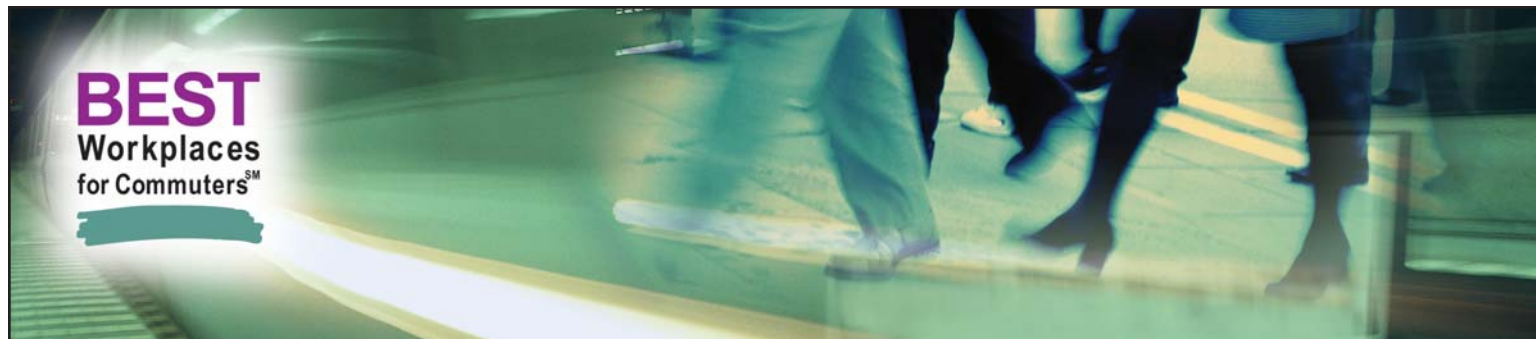
- Ms. Snyder agreed to create a template media advisory to help support the community coordinators' efforts.

#### Bryan Cohen, Media Consultant, Colehour+Cohen

Mr. Cohen has supported media outreach for Best Workplaces for Commuters since 2001. He has successfully placed list release stories in local, regional, and national print, radio, and broadcast media outlets across the country. He participated in the call to lend his expertise and experience to the 2006 community coordinators. A summary of Mr. Cohen's key points and examples follows:

- In many communities, a Best Workplaces for Commuters list release qualifies as news. In year two and beyond, a significant increase in the list size year-over-year always qualifies as a news story. However, media outlets, especially in larger metro areas, generally do not consider recognition events newsworthy.
- Desk-side briefings with print reporters are the most effective way to ensure media coverage for a list release. In addition, they help establish a relationship with a reporter for future list releases. Desk-side briefings usually last 30 minutes.
- Mr. Cohen suggested that community coordinators, or their media consultants, begin pitching three weeks prior to a list release. He added that reporters should explicitly adhere to an embargo whereby they agree to hold the story until the coordinator and/or EPA release the list. In addition, all media materials delivered to reporters prior to the list release should include the note "under embargo until X date."





- To encourage broadcast media coverage, reporters should be provided with visuals and props at a designated employer's worksite. Examples include commuters arriving by vanpool, bus, or train, and bikers securing their bikes.
- Mr. Cohen suggested using a list release approach that is appropriate to the market. However, generally, media events and/or media pitching are less resource-intensive than recognition events.
- Designated market areas (DMAs) are defined by the number of television viewing households. Smaller DMAs are less competitive and more likely to cover a recognition event that has a media-friendly component.
- Successful media pitching requires dedication. Mr. Cohen explained that some stories require nearly 30 calls and e-mails to get a reporter's attention. He noted that the caller should attempt to find someone likely to cover the story possibly on the transportation, business, or environmental beat. Mr. Cohen added that community coordinators should keep in mind that business journals generally publish on Wednesdays or Thursdays.
- For community coordinators working in the top 20 DMAs, the goal should be to place a story in the print media on the day of the release. Generally, broadcast media follows up on successful stories covered by print media. Community coordinators working in smaller DMAs, can benefit by involving a mayor or councilperson.
- Mr. Cohen noted that in order to accommodate broadcast media, a media event should be located in close proximity to the media outlets' offices. Depending on the region, the event should be within 20 to 40 minutes of travel time.
- When it comes to media pitching, nothing is guaranteed. Mr. Cohen recommended trying to get a commitment from the media outlets but to be prepared if another breaking story negatively impacts the coverage.
- To track broadcast media coverage, Mr. Cohen recommends working the VMS or another local company that can produce video recordings of the applicable news segments.

## Open Discussion

Rita Hildebrand from the Pima Association of Governments stated that she appreciated the trainings session and learned useful information to help her secure media coverage for the Tucson list release. Ms. Snyder thanked her for her comment and pointed out that the Best Workplaces for Commuters progress report will be released in April and the team is scheduling teleconferences on April 13 and 26 to discuss the results.

Betsy Turner from Phoenix stated that the DMA chart explains why achieving media coverage for the Phoenix list releases has been so challenging. Phoenix is in the top 20 DMAs. Ms. Snyder commented that considering the challenges, Phoenix has been extremely successful.

## Closing

Ms. Snyder thanked Mr. Cohen for sharing his experience generating media interest for list releases. She also thanked the participants for joining the call and added that a call summary will be available at <[www.bwc.gov](http://www.bwc.gov)>.

